

# National Elk Refuge News – November 8, 2006

## *New Pivot Installed*



*The new pivot system was installed on the National Elk Refuge this fall.*

A pivot from the Cokeville Meadows National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) was recently moved to the National Elk Refuge, an addition that will assist the station in increasing herbaceous forage production for wintering elk. Over 2,000 acres of grassland are irrigated in the southern half of the National Elk Refuge.

Cokeville Meadows procured a new pivot with funds through the federal Maintenance Management System (MMS), allowing their previous pivot to become available to the National Elk Refuge. Cokeville Meadows NWR is managed as a satellite of Seedskadee NWR and is located approximately 110 miles south of the National Elk Refuge. A contractor

was hired to dismantle the system, move it to the new location, and reassemble it on site.

The pivot was installed in the Chambers Management Unit, located east of Flat Creek Road. The Chambers area has historically been flood irrigated, a method that uses contour and lateral ditches controlled by headgates. Though flood irrigation is used throughout much of the Refuge, managers have been incorporating other methods of moving water that provide a more uniform distribution of water and are less labor intensive. The Refuge also uses wheel line sprinklers and hand line irrigation pipes, equipment that needs to be moved by hand to water different



*The Chambers Management Unit will require less flood irrigation with the addition of the pivot system.*



*Rubbing, in addition to rolling and wallowing, are common behaviors in bison, relieving itching and facilitating the shedding of fur. Some of the animals have already discovered the new pivot.*

areas. The pivot, however, is powered by a generator and diesel engine that operates central drive motors on each tower, allowing the sprinkler unit to rotate around a central axis and irrigate approximately 120 acres without needing to be moved manually.

Due to its size and difficulty in disassembling or moving it, the pivot will remain in the Chambers area throughout the year; unlike the hand line and wheel line irrigation systems that are dismantled or relocated for the winter.

An expanding population of bison using the National Elk Refuge has created new management challenges for wildlife managers, including property damage. Bison frequently rub on upright, solid structures when they are available. Refuge staff

will keep an eye on the pivot during periods when the animals are in the area and will implement mitigation strategies or customize the equipment if damage by bison becomes a problem. “We’re keeping an eye on the equipment to see how rough the bison will be,” stated Refuge Manager Barry Reiswig. “Fortunately, the pivot is a very sturdy piece of machinery.”

For more information on the Refuge’s irrigation program, visit [www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/Documents/07\\_06\\_06Irrigationcomp.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/Documents/07_06_06Irrigationcomp.pdf).

*A makeshift scratching post was installed on the Refuge last year to deter bison from rubbing on boundary signs and equipment.*

